

PLANNING COMMISSION HEARINGS

General Plan 2020



RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY REFERRALS

August 22 and 29, 2003

DATES: August 22 and 29, 2003
TO: Planning Commission
SUBJECT: General Plan 2020 (District: All)

SUMMARY

General Plan 2020 is a comprehensive update of the San Diego County General Plan, establishing future growth and development patterns for the unincorporated areas of the County. The purpose of this hearing is to receive direction from the Planning Commission regarding land use designations for residential properties that were referred back to staff during a series of Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors hearings on GP2020 held between January 31 and June 25 of this year.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Department of Planning and Land Use

- Recommend that the Board of Supervisors accept staff recommendations for residential property referrals, and accept the August 2003 Working Copy Regional Structure Map and the August 2003 Working Copy Land Use Distribution Map for continued refinement and progress.
- Defer the review of non-residential properties until a comprehensive assessment is scheduled for commercial and industrial land use within the unincorporated County.

FISCAL AND BUSINESS IMPACTS

There are no fiscal or business impacts associated with this report.

ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT

Community Planning or Sponsor Group positions taken on referred properties as of August 1, 2003 are identified in the Referrals Matrix in Attachment A.

BACKGROUND

The updated General Plan 2020 will identify the potential size and distribution of the County's future population – balancing housing, employment and infrastructure needs with resource protection. When compared to the existing General Plan, this update will focus population growth in the western areas of the County where infrastructure and services are available.

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Summary of Recent GP2020 Hearings

On June 25, 2003 the Board of Supervisors directed staff to return on September 24, 2003 with recommendations for residential property referrals. The Board also directed staff to provide opportunities for the Planning Commission and the Community Planning and Sponsor Groups to review residential property referrals prior to returning to the Board on September 24.

On June 25, 2003 the Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to support the direction of General Plan 2020, and to accept its Planning Concepts, Land Use Framework, Goals and Policies, Statements of Legislative Intent, and Regional Maps (December 2002 Working Copy Structure Map and December 2002 Working Copy Land Use Distribution Map) for continued refinement and progress.

On January 31 and March 7, 2003 the Planning Commission voted unanimously to support the direction of General Plan 2020, and to accept the Planning Concepts, Land Use Framework, Statements of Legislative Intent, and Regional Maps (December 2002 Working Copy Structure Map and December 2002 Working Copy Land Use Distribution Map) for continued refinement and progress. The Planning Commission also voted unanimously to accept the draft Goals and Policies as a work in progress subject to future review as part of a complete package of policy statements within the Regional Elements. The Planning Commission also referred specific properties and questions back to staff for further review, and those referrals are included in the Referrals Matrix in Attachment A.

Purpose of Planning Commission Hearing

The purpose of this hearing is to receive direction from the Planning Commission on residential properties referred to staff during the series of Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors hearings on GP2020 held between January 31 and June 25 of this year. Community Planning and Sponsor Groups were sent a list of residential property referrals for review, and their comments (when available) are included in the Referrals Matrix contained in Attachment A. Landowners with referred properties were also notified by mail that their property would be subject to further review.

Non-residential referrals will be deferred to a future hearing that includes a comprehensive review of non-residential land use. Responses to general comments or questions referred to staff are located at the end of Attachment A.

BASIS FOR STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

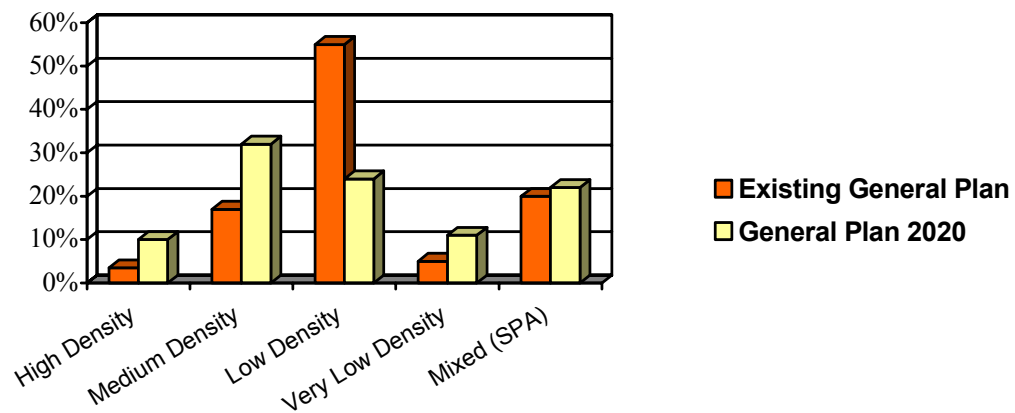
Staff recommendations for property referrals are based on the same principles used to create the GP2020 Planning Concepts, Land Use Framework, draft Goals and Policies, and the December 2002 Working Copy Maps. Decisions on residential referrals should meet the following project objectives:

1. **Develop a Legally Defensible General Plan:** This objective is primarily met by preparing a balanced General Plan where future growth is planned with public costs, traffic impacts, environmental impacts, and legal consistency requirements in mind.

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2. **Meet Growth Targets:** The population capacity of the December 2002 Working Copy Map was 678,500 persons, which more than met the County's target population of 660,000 persons by the year 2020. In many cases, population projections also met individual community target populations. The August 2003 Working Copy Map would produce a minor increase in population capacity when compared to the December 2002 Working Copy Map.
3. **Reduce Public Costs:** Reducing and relocating potential population growth to areas near existing infrastructure will reduce future public costs for roads, law enforcement, fire protection, emergency medical, and other services or facilities needed to support the County's future residents. Property referrals that would increase public costs include low-density residential areas in remote locations.
4. **Balance Competing Interests:** Accommodating residential growth on less land reduces the competition for land available for housing, commerce, agriculture, and habitat preservation. This was accomplished in GP2020 by reducing the capacity for large lot residential development, and by increasing the capacity for small lot and multi-family development. This objective played a strong role when assessing property referrals for low-density residential development in remote or highly constrained locations, in areas with significant environmental resources, and in areas with highly productive agricultural operations.

Future Dwelling Units (Present – 2020)



5. **Improve Housing Affordability:** The GP2020 Working Copy Map increases density in appropriate locations in order to provide more opportunities for multi-family housing or small lot, single-family development – which is associated with affordable building types. Referrals that increase potential growth on highly constrained land will not improve housing affordability because development costs are higher on constrained land.
6. **Assign Densities Based on Characteristics of the Land:** Assigning density based on an area's topography, habitats, road access, available services, groundwater resources, and agricultural operations/contracts produces land use maps that more

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accurately reflect development capacity. This objective was strongly considered when assessing residential referrals on highly constrained land.

7. **Locate Growth near Infrastructure, Services and Jobs:** This concept directs future growth to areas where existing physical infrastructure and services can support that growth and to locations within or adjacent to existing communities. Most areas that are appropriate for directing future growth are located within the County Water Authority (CWA) boundary. This objective was strongly considered when assessing residential referrals in remote locations, especially those located outside the CWA boundary.

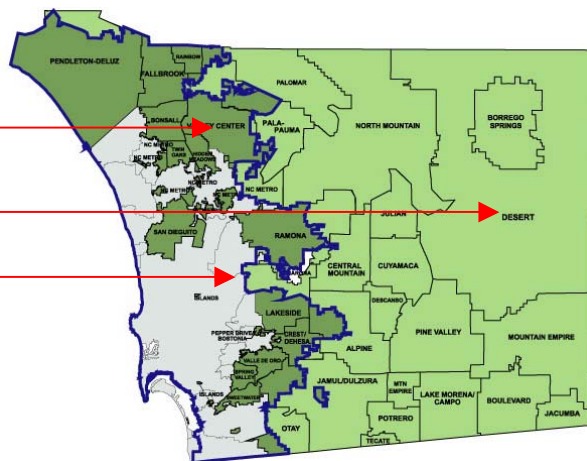
Population in 2020 is focused inside the CWA boundary:

80% of the population in 2020 will be located inside CWA boundary.

20% will be located outside the CWA boundary.

CWA Boundary

The population distribution on the existing General Plan is **60%** inside and **40%** outside the CWA boundary.

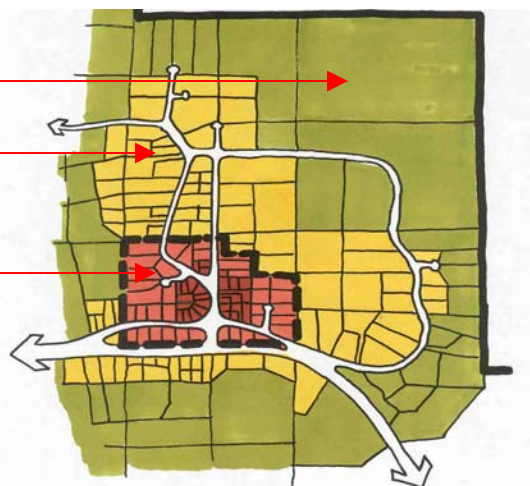


8. **Create a Model for Community Development:** GP2020 Planning Concepts provide a physical structure for creating communities. As formalized in regional categories within the Land Use Framework (see **Attachment D**), each existing or planned community will, whenever possible, include an urbanized area surrounded by semi-rural and rural land.

Rural Lands

Semi-Rural

Urban Areas
(Village and Village
Core)



The community development model was considered when a referred request would produce a disjointed land development pattern. For example, many requests would produce isolated pockets of Semi-Rural densities in areas categorized as Rural

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Lands. In already developed locations, it is important that requests for density changes are consistent with existing development patterns. In less urbanized areas, it is important that requests for density changes are consistent with the community's overall development pattern and existing constraints.

9. Obtain a Broad Consensus: Staff recommendations on property referrals are designed to retain a broad consensus for GP2020 concepts and maps, which were produced through a long, complex planning process. GP2020 Working Copy Maps incorporate preferences of Community Planning and Sponsor Groups, the Interest Group Committee, the Steering Committee, and individual landowners.

REGIONAL MAPS

Structure Map

The August 2003 Working Copy Structure Map (see Attachment B¹) illustrates the proposed distribution of regional categories (Village Core, Village, Semi-Rural, Rural Lands and Public Lands) within the unincorporated County. Each regional category allows a specific range of residential densities. Inside the CWA boundary, Village and Village core areas are the preferred locations for directing future growth and development; outside the CWA boundary, they represent existing development and parcelization. In all communities, Semi-Rural land is contained and typically recognizes existing development or parcelization. Rural Lands inside of the CWA boundary represent greenbelts between communities or areas of contiguous open space with moderate to severe constraints and a lack of infrastructure.

Land Use Distribution Map

The August 2003 Working Copy Land Use Distribution Map (see Attachment B) shows the proposed distribution of residential land use. This map is consistent with the Regional Structure Map, and it includes staff recommendations for property referrals based on a review of comments received from the Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors, Community Planning and Sponsor Groups, landowners, and the public during GP2020 hearings. Staff refinements to the map reflect those comments that are consistent with GP2020 objectives.

Community-level land use distribution maps, located in Attachment C, include changes to the December 2002 Working Copy Map based on staff recommendations for residential property referrals. Those recommendations are summarized in the Referrals Matrix in Attachment A, which divides property referrals into three groups:

- **Agree:** This category includes property referrals where staff recommendations are the same as those requested by a landowner.
- **Compromise:** This category includes property referrals where staff recommendations move the residential density closer to that requested by a

¹ Attachments B and C will be distributed to the Planning Commission under separate cover prior to the hearing date of August 22. Due to the bulk of the Attachments, they will only be made available as handouts to the public at the public hearing and on the GP2020 website.

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landowner (or community group), but the staff recommendation does not match the density requested.

- **Disagree:** This category primarily includes property referrals where the density on the December 2002 Working Copy Map was retained. In some circumstances, the reassessment resulted in a density reduction.

Overall, staff either agreed with (or agreed to a compromise solution for) 50% of all residential referrals. Conversely, staff disagreed with half of the residential referrals, which typically were requests for higher density.

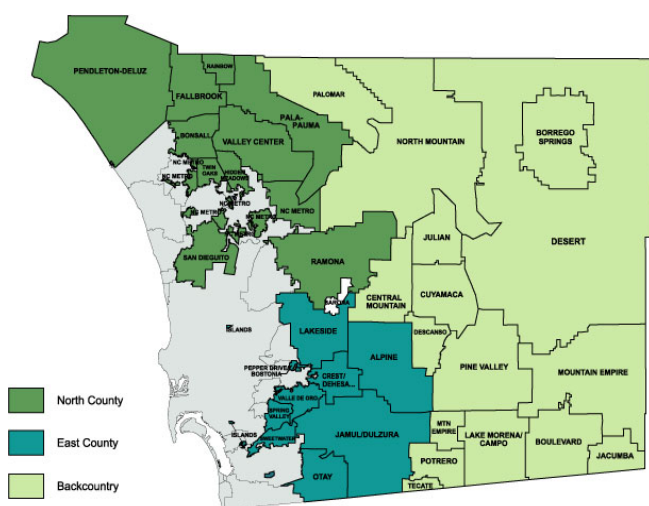
Residential Referrals: Summary of Staff Recommendations

Sub-region	Agree	Compromise	Disagree	TOTAL
North County	15	19	42	76
East County	11	24	21	56
Backcountry	5	10	19	34
TOTAL	31	53	82	166

Valley Center, Pala Pauma, and North County Metro had the highest number of referrals, followed by the Lakeside/Pepper-Drive, Ramona and Crest-Dehesa communities. Numbers do not always reflect the potential impact of referrals, however, because some referrals (Twin Oaks and Julian are two examples) affect large segments of the community.

COMMUNITY MAP REVIEW

In order to simplify the community map review process, this section summarizes proposed modifications to community maps within three sub-regions:



- North County Communities
- East County Communities
- Backcountry Communities.

A summary of community issues, along with an explanation of proposed changes, is provided for each sub-region.

Referrals for North County communities will be reviewed on August 22, 2003 while referrals for East County and Backcountry communities will be reviewed on August 29, 2003.

NORTH COUNTY COMMUNITIES

Of the three sub-regions, North County communities contain the most undeveloped land that is located inside the CWA boundary and near the region's employment centers. These communities also contain much of the region's agriculture, significant amounts of rugged terrain, and areas with sensitive environmental habitats. Many areas have existing road deficiencies and lack sewer service.

The combination of physical conditions, existing uses, and development pressures produces a strong competition for land in North County communities. Pressures for residential growth are particularly high in North County Metro, Fallbrook, Valley Center and San Dieguito. With the exception of Pendleton-Deluz, which is primarily occupied by a military installation, North County communities share the following objectives:

- Retain rural character while accommodating population growth.
- Balance residential growth with protections for sensitive habitats and retention of prime agricultural land.
- Density reductions should be accompanied equity mechanisms.
- Communities located next to incorporated jurisdictions want to retain their rural character.

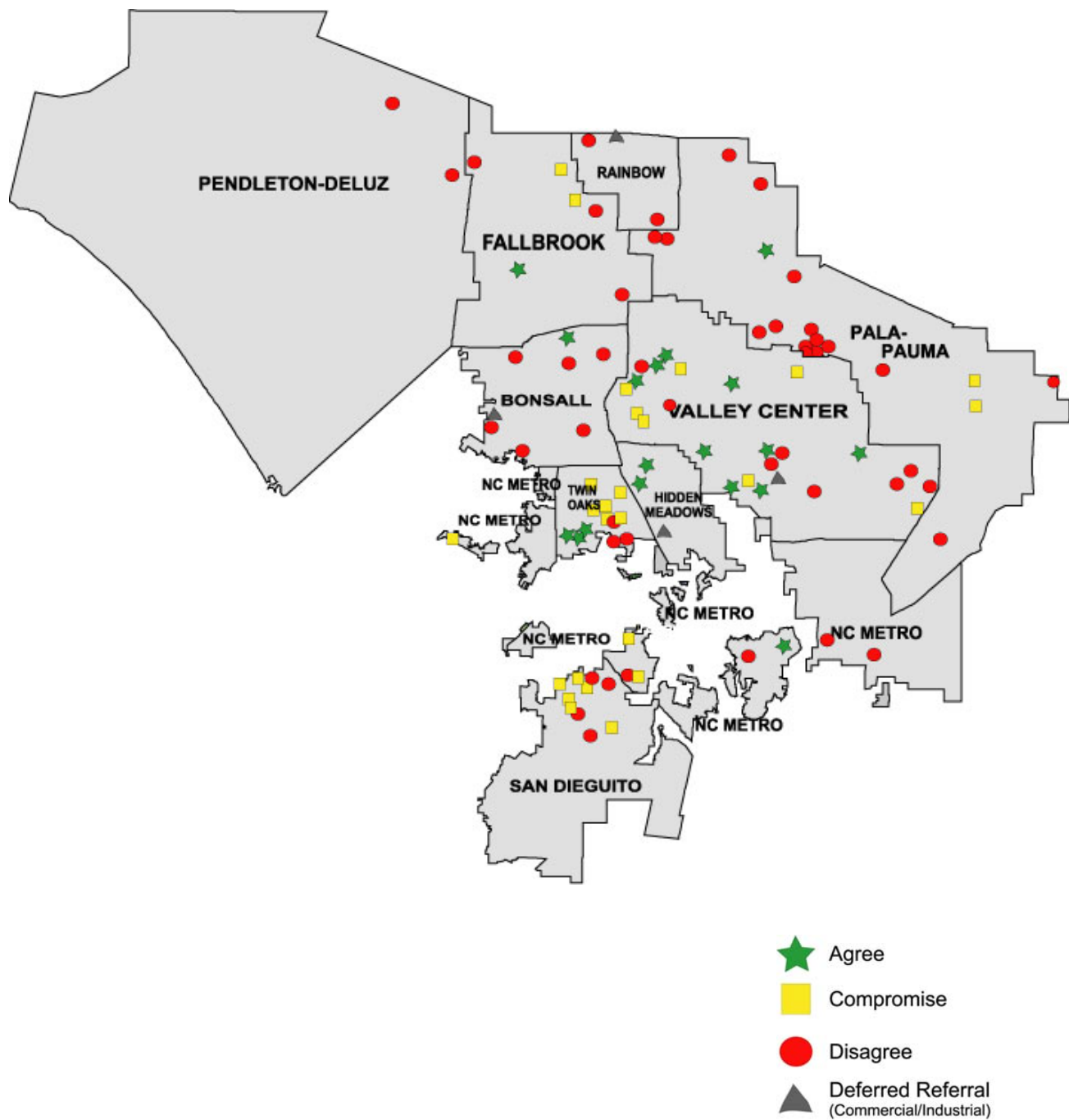
Existing and projected infrastructure deficiencies must be addressed to realize this area's growth potential. Also, resolving the competition for land requires developing new or expanded town centers in Harmony Grove and Valley Center. Fallbrook's Hewlett Packard site will be planned as a mixed-use employment center.

North County Property Referrals

Substantial change in residential density is recommended for the North County Metro sub-region, which abuts incorporated communities experiencing high levels of growth. Proposed changes are primarily located in Twin Oaks – especially along its southern interface with San Marcos – and near a transit stop for the Oceanside to Escondido rail corridor. Earlier projections for the North County Metro sub-region showed that its population could double by the year 2020, and these changes would increase that growth potential.

In Semi-Rural areas inside the CWA boundary, requests for increases in residential density were mapped when it resulted in a coherent density pattern compatible with site constraints. For example, residential density was increased when the density requested was appropriate and matched adjacent densities. In some cases, staff proposed a compromise solution that created a split designation on large parcels that contained different types of physical or environmental constraints.

North County Property Referrals



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Working Copy Map densities were retained for property referrals represented by the following situations:

- Productive agriculture: Densities were retained within the County's most productive agricultural areas, where residential densities of 1 du/ 10 acres or less are recommended. Those areas include Pauma Valley, Twin Oaks Valley, and locations along the Bonsall/ Valley Center border near Lilac Road and I-15.
- Highly constrained land: Within the CWA boundary, property referrals located in areas categorized as Rural Lands typically contain steep slopes, significant environmental constraints, and limited access to infrastructure or services. In most of these areas, a compromise solution was recommended or densities were retained. In three locations, high expectations for growth conflict with the physical characteristics of the land: Elfin Forest in San Dieguito², Hellhole Canyon in Valley Center, and properties along the Pala Pauma / Valley Center border. These areas contain multiple referrals in highly constrained locations.
- Semi-Rural: Original densities were retained when property referrals were located in isolated pockets surrounded by constrained land with lower densities.
- Outside CWA boundary: Most property referrals located outside the CWA boundary are located in isolated, remote areas designated as Rural Lands. Because those areas contain multiple physical constraints – and lack the infrastructure or services to support population growth – densities were retained. Exceptions were made for referrals that were adjacent to existing settlements. In those cases, a minor change to the land use pattern could be accommodated while remaining consistent with project concepts and objectives.

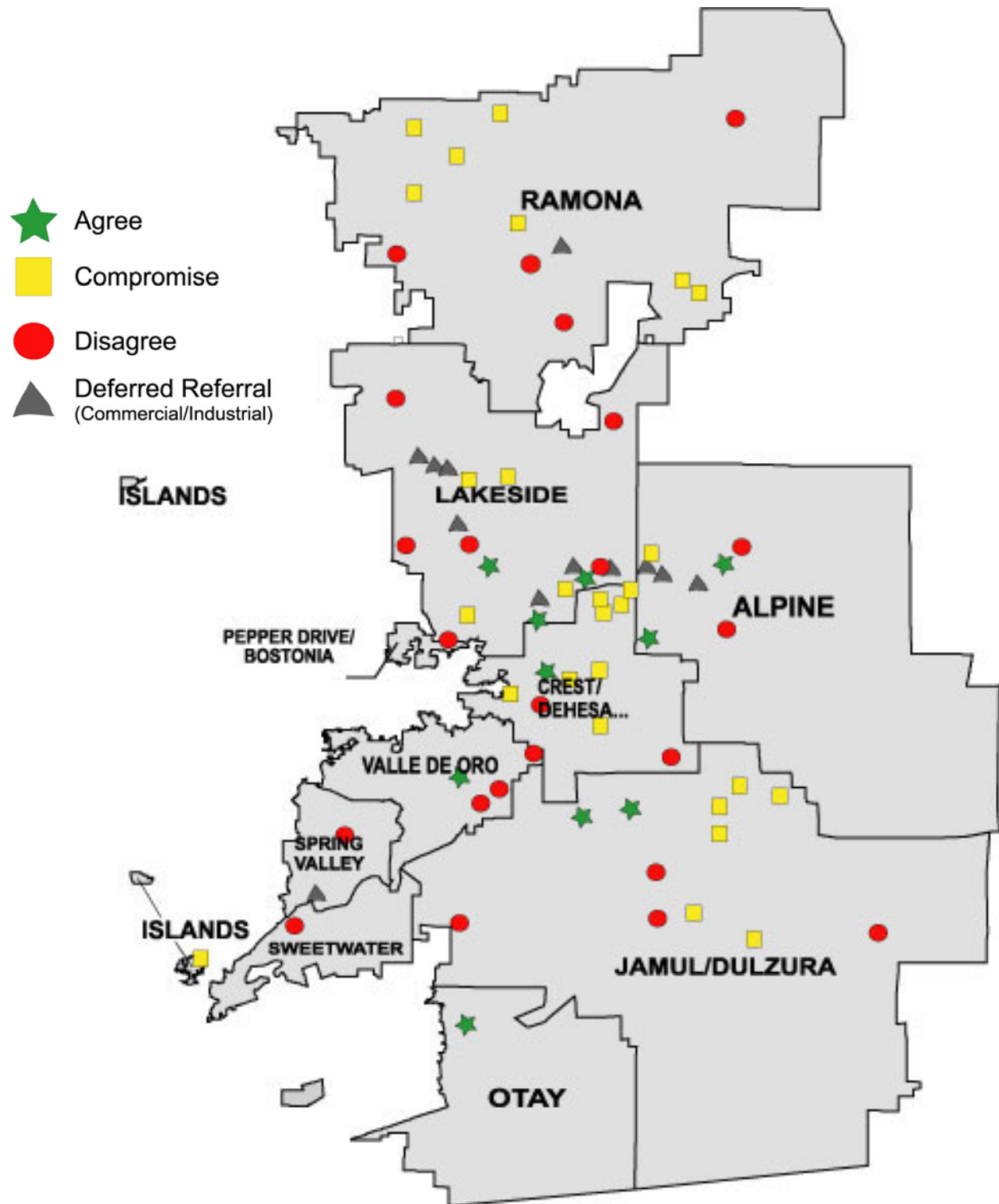
EAST COUNTY COMMUNITIES

Most East County communities have limited potential for future growth because much of their land within the CWA boundary is already developed. The exception is Ramona, which shares more characteristics with North County communities than with its East County neighbors. Lakeside, Valle de Oro, Spring Valley, and Sweetwater contain substantial existing populations and want to retain their community character and remaining open space. Some East County communities, such as Spring Valley, were built over time without a balanced community development plan and are candidates for future redevelopment.

Crest Dehesa/Harbison Canyon/Granite Hills lies within the CWA boundary, but its population growth is restricted by rugged terrain, limited infrastructure, and environmental constraints. Jamul/Dulzura is a relatively undeveloped community, but much of its land is located outside the CWA boundary. Alpine faces growth limitations imposed by the Forest Conservation Initiative (FCI), and future growth in Otay (which contains considerable public land) is based on the East Otay Mesa and Otay Ranch Specific Plans.

² A compromise solution is recommended for a small portion of the Elfin Forest area.

East County Property Referrals



East County Property Referrals

Property referrals in East County fell into three general categories: requests for higher density in urbanized areas; requests for higher density in Semi-Rural areas within the CWA boundary; and requests for higher density in Rural Lands outside the CWA boundary.

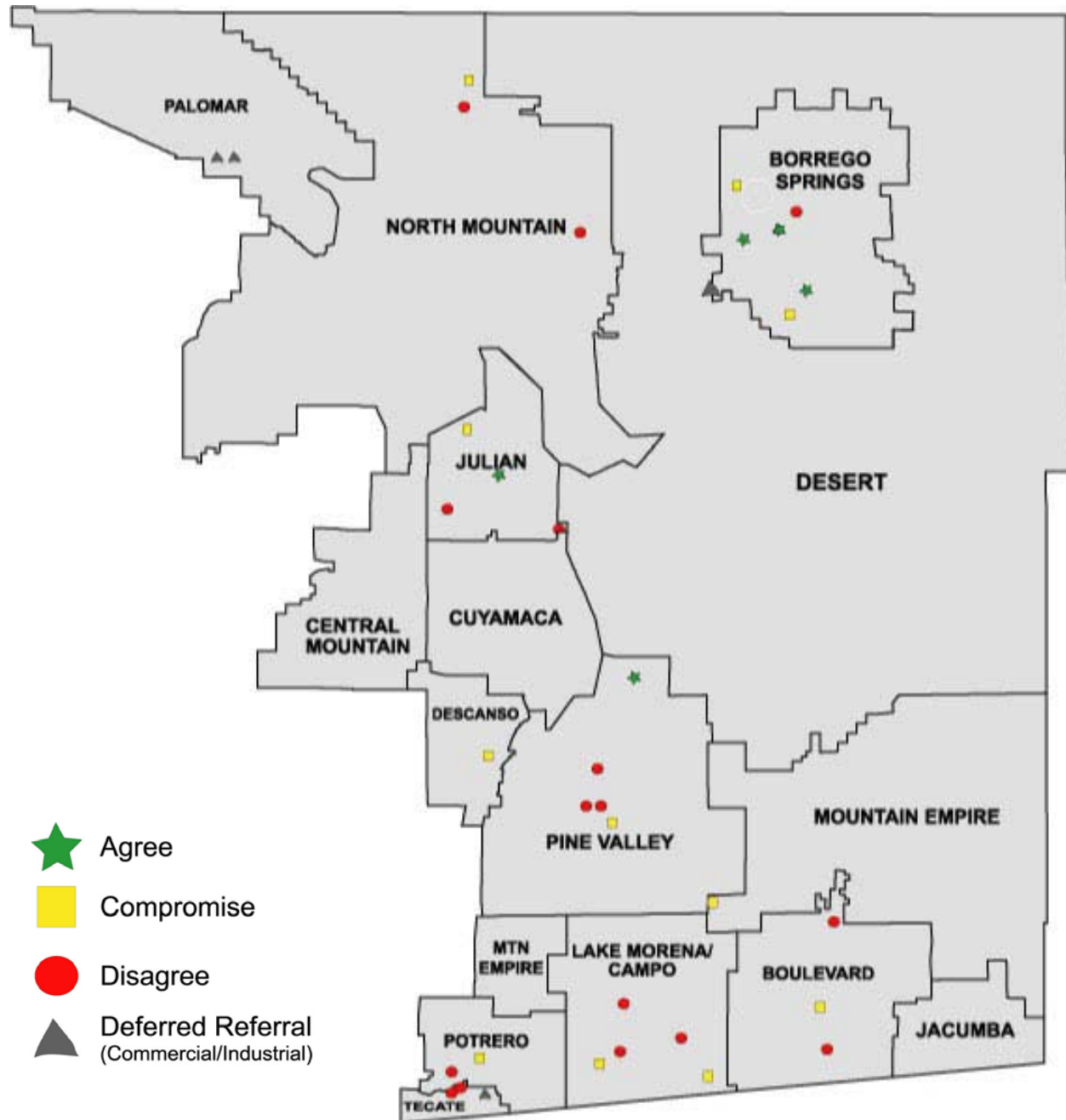
- Urbanized: Staff assessments for property referrals in East County's urbanized areas focused on the character of adjacent development, combined with a detailed analysis of existing site conditions. Density was increased if the request would produce development consistent with the character of the site and surrounding development. Density was retained if those criteria were not met.
- Semi-Rural: In Semi-Rural areas inside the CWA boundary, requests for increases in residential density were mapped when it resulted in a coherent density pattern that was compatible with site constraints. In some cases, staff proposed a compromise solution that created a split designation on large parcels that contained different types of physical or environmental constraints.
- Outside CWA boundary: Most property referrals located outside the CWA boundary are located in isolated, remote areas designated as Rural Lands. Because those areas contain multiple physical constraints – and lack the infrastructure or services to support population growth – densities were retained. Exceptions were made for referrals that are adjacent to existing settlements. In those cases, a minor change to the land use pattern could be accommodated while meeting project objectives.

BACKCOUNTRY COMMUNITIES

Reducing population growth in the backcountry was accomplished in the December 2002 Working Copy Map by applying Rural Lands densities to areas not developed or parcelized. San Diego's backcountry includes Julian and four sub-regions: Palomar/North Mountain; Desert/Borrego Springs; Central Mountain (Cuyamaca, Descanso, and Pine Valley); and Mountain Empire (Jacumba, Boulevard, Lake Morena/Campo, Potrero, and Tecate). With few exceptions, backcountry communities are sparsely populated and share the following issues or characteristics:

- Communities want to preserve existing environmental resources and the rural setting.
- The area is dominated by rugged terrain and sensitive environmental habitats.
- Road networks, public services, and employment opportunities are limited.
- Without imported water, groundwater will limit future growth. Sewer service is limited to Julian and Borrego.
- Two areas – Borrego Springs and Tecate – contain unique groundwater and border issues that must be considered.

Backcountry Property Referrals



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Backcountry communities contain a substantial amount of public land, Tribal Lands and land affected by the FCI Initiative – where the County has minimal control over land use. Future population growth will be concentrated in Borrego Springs and Mountain Empire, which contain substantial amounts of private, undeveloped land.

Backcountry Property Referrals

Two special cases were addressed in backcountry communities³:

- Julian: The Julian Community Planning Group voted to change Rural Lands densities in their community from 1 du/ 40 acres to 1 du / 80 acres, and that request is reflected in the August 2003 Working Copy Map.
- Borrego Springs: Landowners and the Community Sponsor Group requested that staff apply a density of 1 du/ 4 acres to a section of Borrego Springs used for agricultural purposes. The Planning Commission also referred this area to staff for further review. The requests for higher density are intended to encourage the transfer of land from agricultural to residential use, which consumes less water. In order to improve the level of consensus in Borrego Springs, this request is reflected in the August 2003 Working Copy Map.

Most property referrals in backcountry communities are located in isolated, remote areas designated as Rural Lands. Staff recommended that residential designations for those properties be retained. Minor exceptions were made for referrals that are adjacent to existing settlements. In those cases, a minor change to the land use pattern could be accommodated while meeting project objectives.

FUTURE MAP REFINEMENTS

Staff will continue to work with all North County, East County, and Backcountry communities to resolve as many outstanding issues as possible within the GP 2020 planning framework. During upcoming months, staff will continue to work with communities to refine their land use maps, especially in communities with substantial levels of commercial and industrial land. Maps for Valley Center and Ramona may be modified to address community issues identified during recent town center planning workshops, and other community maps may be refined to balance land use with projected traffic demands or to meet Housing Element requirements.

ENVIRONMENTAL STATUS

A Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report has been prepared and is on file at the Department of Planning and Land Use, 5201 Ruffin Road, Suite B, San Diego, California 92123.

³ All referrals for Tecate involve commercial and industrial use, and that discussion will be deferred until a later hearing.

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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Referrals Matrix
Attachment B: Regional Maps
Attachment C: Community Maps
Attachment D: Land Use Framework
Attachment E: Correspondence

Note: Attachments B and C will be distributed under separate cover prior to the Planning Commission hearing on August 22. Because these attachments are substantial in size and bulk, they will only be made available to the public as handouts at the Planning Commission Hearings and on the GP2020 website at

<http://www.sdcountry.ca.gov/cnty/cntydepts/landuse/planning/GP2020/index.html>

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